

2024 Accessibility Status Report



Region of Waterloo

Accessibility at the Region of Waterloo

The Region of Waterloo is committed to making our services, programs, workplace and public spaces more accessible so we can better meet the needs of people with disabilities in our community. By actively removing accessibility barriers to Regional services, programs and spaces, we recognize the broader, positive impact this can have on how all members of the community experience our services.

We will demonstrate this commitment to improve our services and programs through collaboration with residents and by designing our services based on a foundation of accessibility. What we do now to improve the accessibility of our services and programs allows us to prepare for the future as our community continues to grow. Enhancing service experiences and making our services more accessible improves the quality of life for people with disabilities in our community and helps to increase trust and confidence with the Region and in the work that we do every day.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Legislation Requirements

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005*, is a law that sets out a process for developing and enforcing accessibility standards and applies to every person or organization in the public and private sectors in the Province of Ontario. We will highlight the legislated requirements and components of the AODA that apply to this report for background and context:

- The five Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations in the AODA.
- Accessibility advisory committees.
- Multi-year accessibility plans.
- Annual accessibility status reports.

Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations of the AODA

There are five Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations (Standards) of the AODA. The Standards are laws that government, businesses, non-profits and public sector organizations must follow to become more accessible by January 1, 2025. The Standards help organizations identify and remove barriers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities in five areas of daily life. The Standards are:

- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation

The Province of Ontario issued a statement on the [About accessibility laws](#) webpage to address the January 1, 2025 deadline that says,

“We have made progress in making Ontario accessible and continue to work towards removing barriers. However, making Ontario accessible by 2025 is a complex and ongoing process that can’t be completed by the province on its own. By working together, businesses, organizations, communities and all levels of government can meet the goal of making Ontario more accessible and inclusive.”

Accessibility Advisory Committees

All municipalities that have a population of 10,000 or more residents must have an accessibility advisory committee (AAC), where the majority of committee members must be persons with disabilities. Two or more municipalities may establish a joint committee instead of having separate committees. AACs provide advice on how to implement the five Standards of the AODA to improve accessibility. The AODA legislation has a list of requirements that AACs must be consulted on to improve the accessibility of services and public spaces. For the purposes of this report and what is under the municipal responsibilities of the Region of Waterloo, examples of where AACs must be consulted are as follows (this list is not exhaustive):

- Developing, reviewing and updating multi-year accessibility plans.
- Developing accessible design criteria in construction, renovation or placement of bus stops and shelters.
- Determining the proportion of on-demand accessible taxis needed in our community.
- The need, location and design of accessible on-street parking spaces when building new or making major changes to existing on-street parking spaces.
- Building new or making major changes to existing recreational trails to help determine particular trail features.
- The design and placement of rest areas along exterior paths of travel when building new or making major changes to existing exterior paths of travel.
- Advice on accessibility for people with disabilities on buildings that Council constructs, purchases, significantly renovates or leases or declares a municipal capital facility.
- Advice on site plans for municipal offices and on elements of a site plan that impact accessibility such as buildings, driveways, entrance curbs or ramping, parking areas, sidewalks, landscaping, fences, exterior lighting and municipal services.
- Other areas and initiatives where it is appropriate to seek advice on how to remove barriers for people with disabilities.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plans (MYAP)

Designated public sector organizations, which includes municipalities and public transportation organizations, must develop a written multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP) that is updated at least once every five years and is posted on the organization's website. The accessibility plan outlines what steps the organization will take to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility, how it will meet AODA requirements and when the steps will be taken. Municipalities can consult with people with disabilities in their community and must consult with their established AAC, as described in the previous section, in the development of their accessibility plans. The Region organizes its MYAP goals on the five Standards of the AODA and describes what we will do to meet those Standards and how we will remove barriers for people with disabilities in our community.

Annual Accessibility Status Reports

Designated public sector organizations, such as municipalities and public transportation organizations, must prepare an annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement what is described in their multi-year accessibility plans. Accessibility status reports are reviewed by a municipality's established AAC. The report must be posted on the organization's website and made publicly available. The Region organizes its annual accessibility status reports on the five Standards of the AODA and describes the actions we have taken to achieve the goals of our MYAP.

Region of Waterloo Accessibility Plan Status Update

The AODA requires designated public sector organizations, such as municipalities, to provide an annual accessibility status report on what actions were taken to meet the legislative requirements and describe their progress on their multi-year accessibility plans. This Accessibility Status Report describes what the Region did in 2024 to meet the requirements of the five Standards in the AODA legislation and what we did to achieve the goals of our multi-year accessibility plan (MYAP). The five Standards of the AODA are:

- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service
- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation

2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP)

The Region's [2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan \(MYAP\)](#) identifies and describes how we will remove barriers to and improve the accessibility of our services, programs and public spaces for people with disabilities in our community. The MYAP was approved by Regional Council in May 2023. The Region's MYAP outlines the goals we have set for the organization to meet the five Standards of the AODA and what we will do to improve the accessibility of our services, programs and public spaces for people with disabilities. The MYAP was created in consultation with Regional staff and the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC).

The Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee

Public engagement and consultation is an important feature of the work we do at the Region of Waterloo. Regional staff rely on feedback and input from the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee (GRAAC) to ensure we are working towards our vision of providing inclusive services. GRAAC is the Region's accessibility advisory committee (AAC) that we are required to have as per the AODA legislation, and it is a shared, Committee of Council with the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich. The City of Cambridge manages its own advisory committee.

A key role of GRAAC is to advise Council and staff members on how to meet the five Standards of the AODA and on the accessibility of Regional services, programs, and public spaces. Members of GRAAC are appointed by Regional Council and by the Councils for the Cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, and the area townships, all of whom seek the advice of GRAAC in matters of accessibility. GRAAC consists of 15 community members who have disabilities or are part of the disability community, Regional and area municipality staff and Councillors.

The Region has previously consulted with GRAAC on many services and initiatives that are required under the AODA legislation. In 2024, the Region consulted with GRAAC on the following:

- GRT (Grand River Transit) 2023 status update
- Region of Waterloo Website and Engage consultation
- GRT Specialized and Conventional Business Plans (2025 – 2030)
- Phase 1: Kitchener Central Transit Hub
- 150 Frederick washroom renovation
- Waterloo Regional Housing, Mooregate redevelopment
- 2025 Plan and Budget priorities
- 150 Frederick Street pavestone replacement
- Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPS) program overview

In 2024, the Region consulted with the Cambridge Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on the following:

- Waterloo Region Housing, Westgate curb ramp

Accessibility Status Report

The 2024 Accessibility Status Report includes the Region's commitment to removing barriers to our services, programs and public spaces and describes what we have done to achieve the goals in the 2023-2027 MYAP to meet the five Standards of the AODA. The actions the Region took in 2024 to improve the accessibility of our services, programs and public spaces are organized around the five Standards of the AODA. These updates and information on the actions can be found in Appendix B.

In the AODA legislation, there are additional reporting requirements under the Transportation Standard and Design of Public Spaces Standard. The Transportation Standard requires transit organizations, Grand River Transit (GRT), to annually report on actions that were taken to meet requirements and what was done to improve the accessibility of services as it relates to the MYAP.

Under the Design of Public Spaces Standard, organizations are required to have procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance on accessible elements in public spaces and procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when the accessible elements are not in working order. The updates and information for both requirements can also be found in Appendix B under each of the respective Standards.

Reviewing and Monitoring the MYAP

The Region of Waterloo's multi-year accessibility plans are reviewed and updated at least once every five years. An annual status report is completed to document the progress and measures taken to achieve the goals in the Region's 2023-2027 MYAP and meet the requirements of the five Standards of the AODA.

Feedback

We welcome feedback on the 2024 Accessibility Status Report, and on the accessibility of our services, programs and public spaces. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please contact us.

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The 2024 Accessibility Status Report is available online (www.regionofwaterloo.ca/accessibility) in accessible PDF. Alternate formats, including full-text Word and paper copies of the 2024 Accessibility Status Report and the 2023-2027 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan are available upon request at no charge from:

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